yet to be made available to Doordarshan by the State Government. It would take about 3 years to complete the project, after the site is made available to Doordarshan by the State Government.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

Women judges in family courts

2808. SHRIMATI BIMBA RAIKAR: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state :

(a) the number of women judges appointed in Family Courts *vis-a-vis* the Family Courts in the country;

(b) whether representation of the women judges in Family Courts is adequate;

(c) whether despite provision 13 of the Family Courts Act, 1984 to the contrary, parties to a suit or proceedings before a Family Court, are being represented by a lawyer;

(d) whether Government feel that the presence of lawyers in Family Courts would vitiate the ambience of the Court and thereby adversely affect the process of settlement; and

(e) whether there is any proposal to amend the Act and if so, the details of the proposed amendments?

THE MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE AND COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI ARUN JAITLEY): (a) and (b) As per available information, out of 123 Family Courts in the country, there are 31 women Judges. Appointment of Family Courts is made by the State Government after consultation with the High Court subject to the qualification laid down in section 4(3)(a) of the Family Courts Act, 1984. However, the State Governments/UT Administrations have been requested to take suitable steps for appointment of women Judges in the Family Courts.

(c) and (d) The Committee on Empowerment of Women have observed that lawyers were found appearing in Family Courts at Mumbai, Hyderabad and Jaipur. Pursuant to this observation of the Committee, the State Governments/UT Administrations, under intimation to Registrar Generals

of all High Courts, have been requested to take necessary action for appointment of sufficient number of Counsellors, specially women and NGOs to assist the Family Courts in discharging their duties. Though section 13 prohibits a party to a suit or proceeding in a Family Court from claiming, as of right, to be represented by a legal practitioner, that does not preclude the Family Courts from granting permission in the exercise of its discretion to a party to be represented by a legal practitioner depending upon circumstances. The Supreme Court has held that it is for the Family Court to decide whether it should permit such representation.

(e) There is no such proposal at present.

Personal law reforms

2809. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA :

DR. AKHILESH DAS :

Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state :

(a) whether as expressed by him, Government recognize the need for accelerating personal law reforms as a means for empowering women, while inaugurating a seminar on the 'Women Property Rights, a Gender Perspective';

(b) if so, the steps, if any, which have been and are being taken in this direction; and

(c) the plan of action, if any, drawn out for the purpose?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI P.C. THOMAS): (a) to (c)Yes, Sir. The Government recognises the need for accelerating personal law reforms as a means of empowering women. The National Policy for Empowerment of Women, 2001, *inter alia,* has following notable features in this regard;

(i) At the initiative of and with the full participation of all stakeholders including community and religious leaders, the Policy would aim at encouraging change in personal laws such as those related to marriage, divorce, maintenance and guardianship so as to eliminate discrimination against women.

(ii) The evolution of property rights in a patriarchal system has contributed to the subordinate status of women. The policy would aim at encouraging changes in laws relating to ownership of property and inheritance by evolving consensus in order to make them gender just.